



Vibrant Southwestern Town Tackles Brownfields

Today, Silver City, New Mexico, population 12,064, is marked by an active tourism industry, a vibrant arts community, an annual bicycle race, rodeos, conferences, music festivals, and a growing retiree and "telecommuter" community. But even in a town like Silver City, there are brownfields problems remaining to be solved.

Situated on the east slope of the Continental Divide in southwestern part of the state, Silver City was established in 1870 when silver was found in the area. In contrast to other mining communities which eventually became ghost towns, Silver City continued to thrive by expanding its economy to include copper mining, cattle ranching, and lumber milling.

Industry, and the people it brought with it, contributed to Silver City's four targeted brownfields: Beacon Hill, a 462-acre parcel that was one of the first areas to be mined near Silver City; the old town landfill, a 50-acre closed and capped landfill adjacent to the city golf course; and two mill sites.

In May of 2000, the EPA selected Silver City as a Brownfields Pilot Project. The city also received additional greenspace funding for assessments at brownfields properties. The Pilot has integrated planning activities for Boston Hill with greenspace planning for other target sites, such as additional ball fields at the Old Landfill and a trail/riparian corridor along San Vicente Arroyo and Pinos Altos Creek to include the Mill Sites and a landfill borrow pit.

The City plans to preserve open space through the identification of trail corridors and other activities, improve air quality, promote groundwater recharge, preserve distinctive view and natural features, buffer neighborhoods, and provide a contrast to urban development.

Silver City's aim in redevelopment is to stimulate more investment in the community and promote a future based on economically sustainable development and adequate environmental health. The town seeks to promote brownfields cleanup and redevelopment, preservation of open space, and increased recreational and economic opportunities that are compatible with the town's western small-town atmosphere and rich cultural heritage.